

**AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION:**

Please replace the paragraph starting at page 6, line 8 with the following amended paragraph:

The environmentally responsive headsets exemplified in the present invention are capable of changing isolation mode in response to a manual trigger, or automatically in response to matching a sound from the external environment with a stored element of sound characterization information which is programmed within the apparatus. Sounds from the external environment are preferably registered by [[a]] microphones, with one microphone attached, or integrated, into the exterior of each earpiece. Each microphone converts the received external sound energy to an external sound signal. The mode change of the apparatus generally comprises altering the level of acoustical isolation accorded the wearer by the headset. The mode of the headset may be changed by any of a number of mechanisms, for example, by temporarily routing external sound to earpieces (a "hearthrough mode"), replaying the detected sound (temporally displaced sound - an "echo back"), generating an alert signal ("user alert tone"), attenuating the sound by augmenting active noise ~~cancellation~~ cancellation with selective sound acoustical isolation ("block matched sound"), amplifying the ambient sounds after extracting spurious noises, accentuating spoken sounds (drop noise floor while amplifying speech highlights and formants), combinations of the preceding modes, and so forth. Furthermore, if the headset is configured for listening to a programmed sound, such as that being received over a wired connection, or wireless receiver, then the audio amplitude of the programmed audio source may be temporarily attenuated, or disconnected, such that the external sound may be more easily discerned by the wearer.